Skyline Education Foundation Australia

Evaluation Update February 2021

The Skyline Program invests in three key areas vital for equipping high ability students – gifted and/or academically talented, with a growth mindset, leadership potential and resilience in the face of their social and economic challenges – to find pathways to further study and employment, becoming leaders for change.

- **Financial support**: Reimbursement of educational expenses incurred by students that would otherwise impact families who are already disadvantaged.

- **Transformative learning experiences**: Personal growth and development workshops, vocational seminars and a residential workshop which combine the intimacy of pastoral care and career counselling, and inspire, encourage and empower students of high potential to survive, thrive and lead in an ever-changing educational and economic landscape.

- **Educational and personal support**: A continuum of educational, emotional and practical support and resources that include a strong school, companion teacher and parental support framework and partnerships that wraps-around students whilst undertaking the Program.

Skyline aims to see students transition to tertiary education or career of choice and reach their full potential, and become positive members of their communities.

The original evaluation of the Skyline Program was conducted by I & J Management Services in October 2011. This report continues the annual cycle of evaluation – informed by student feedback, program data and allied research – which updates the Skyline Board on program structure, intent and impact. It is used as an aid in summarising and promoting the value of the Skyline Program.

The January 2021 update draws on a survey of 61 Year 11 and 12 students at the conclusion of a COVID-affected 2020 school year – a year unlike any other experienced by Skyline, schools and the Victorian and international community. Where relevant, the report incorporates data from earlier surveys. The updated information covers:

- key program indicators
- number of Skyline students – by intake year and school
- benefits of the program for participating students
- student ATARS and school awards
- personal, circumstantial and program factors influencing the success of the program
- findings from the 2020 Social Return on Investment (SROI) research.

1.   Key program indicators

Updating KPIs from the Skyline Dashboard

Indicator	Stakeholder	Target	2019	2020
Net Promoter Score	Current students (Year 11 / 12)	≥ 60	80	80 (75 / 83)
	Alumni	≥ 75	90	90
	Schools	≥ 75	82	To come
	Supporters	≥ 65	72	To come
Value attributed to the Skyline experience	Alumni	≥ 80%	90%	85-90%
% of students whose ATAR scores exceed their pre-VCE expectations (increased confidence, new opportunities)	Year 12 students	60%	NA	78%

2.   Summary
Summary of evaluation findings

2020 was an extraordinary year. The global COVID-19 pandemic led to restrictions on movement, gatherings and access to a wide range of services and supports. This was especially the case for VCE students in Victorian schools (as well as university and vocational students) who spent large portions of the 2020 academic year in an unfamiliar and unexpected 'remote and flexible learning' mode (that is, learning from home with instructional support provided by teachers through online means). This was a particular challenge for Skyline students whose pre-existing disadvantage was exacerbated by limited access to appropriate technology infrastructure and connections.

The Skyline team demonstrated their flexibility and resilience by adapting the Program to the changed circumstances. The result was that, according to student feedback and SROI research, the 2020 Skyline experience – while markedly different to that in any previous years – was still a positive, empowering and supportive one for the Skyline students.

The longer-term implications for Skyline students and alumni (and the Skyline Program and society in general) will become apparent over the next two to three years as students transition from school to further education and employment.

3.   Program status
Updating base information on Skyline student numbers and participating schools

Skyline student intake by year and school (to end 2020)

Since the Skyline Program commenced in its current form in 2006, 317 students from 33 schools have participated in the program (see table on following page).

The number of schools participating in the Skyline Program at any one time has changed over the years – from just three schools in 2006, to ten schools in 2010, eleven in 2016 and 26 in 2020.

In 2017 Skyline established a Skyline Program in the Geelong region which has introduced five new schools over the past four years (Northern Bay P-12 College, Newcomb SC, Surf Coast SC, North Geelong SC, Geelong HS). Skyline has also added three schools in Melbourne's south-east since 2018, with students from Dandenong HS, Western Port SC and Carrum Downs SC joining the program. In 2019 Skyline moved further into regional areas, engaging three schools in Victoria's north-east (Mansfield SC, Alexandra SC, Yea HS) to add to Kyneton SC which joined in 2016.

With significant expansion of the Skyline Program having occurred in the past four years, 103 students from 26 different schools participated in the 2020 Program.

Keysborough SC in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs has participated in Skyline continuously since the program's inception and has had by far the most number of bursary recipients (46 students over 15 years). Lyndale SC has also had 29 students in Skyline from 2006 to 2020, missing only in 2016. Braybrook SC (26 students in 9 years) and Melbourne Girls College (21 students from 2007 to 2020) have also had a significant number of students participate in the program. Northern Bay P-12 College has had 21 Skyline students since joining the program in 2017.

Skyline student intake by year and school (to end 2020)

School	Intake Year (commencing Year 11)											Total
	2006 to 2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Keysborough SC*	18	2	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	4	4	46
Lyndale SC	7	1	2	2	2	1	-	3	3	2	6	29
Melbourne Girls College	5	1	2	2	1	-	2	1	3	2	2	21
Collingwood College	3	1	1	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	2	11
Westall SC	2	-	2	2	-	1	1	2	-	2	1	13
Maribyrnong College	5	2	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	11
Braybrook SC			2	3	2	4	2	4	4	2	3	26
South Oakleigh SC				1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	11
Brunswick SC					1	2	-	1	-	2	1	7
Kyneton SC							2	1	2	2	3	10
Narre Warren South P-12 College							1	1	2	2	3	9
Craigieburn SC							2	1	2	-	1	6
Roxburgh College							2	1	-	2	-	5
Northern Bay P-12 College								5	5	5	6	21
Newcomb SC								4	4	2	1	11
Surf Coast SC									5	2	1	8
Dandenong HS									2	2	4	8
Western Port SC									3	2	2	7
North Geelong SC										4	1	5
Mansfield SC										2	3	5
Yea HS										2	3	5
Alexandra SC										2	1	3
Carrum Downs SC										2	1	3
Geelong HS										3	-	3
Melton SC											2	2
Debney Park / Mt Alexander SC	9	1	1	-	1							12
Wangaratta HS	1	1	-	1	-	1						4
Bayside P-12 College	4	1	1									6
University HS	4											4

School	Intake Year (commencing Year 11)											Total
	2006 to 2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Monterey SC	2	1										3
Wellington SC		1										1
Lakeview Senior College							1					1
Total Skyline students	**60**	**12**	**15**	**13**	**14**	**11**	**19**	**29**	**41**	**51**	**52**	**317**

* The Skyline Program supports students in both of Keysborough College's major secondary campuses (Acacia in Keysborough and Banksia in Springvale South). In administering the Skyline Program the two campuses operate independently, and are therefore counted as separate schools in Skyline reporting.
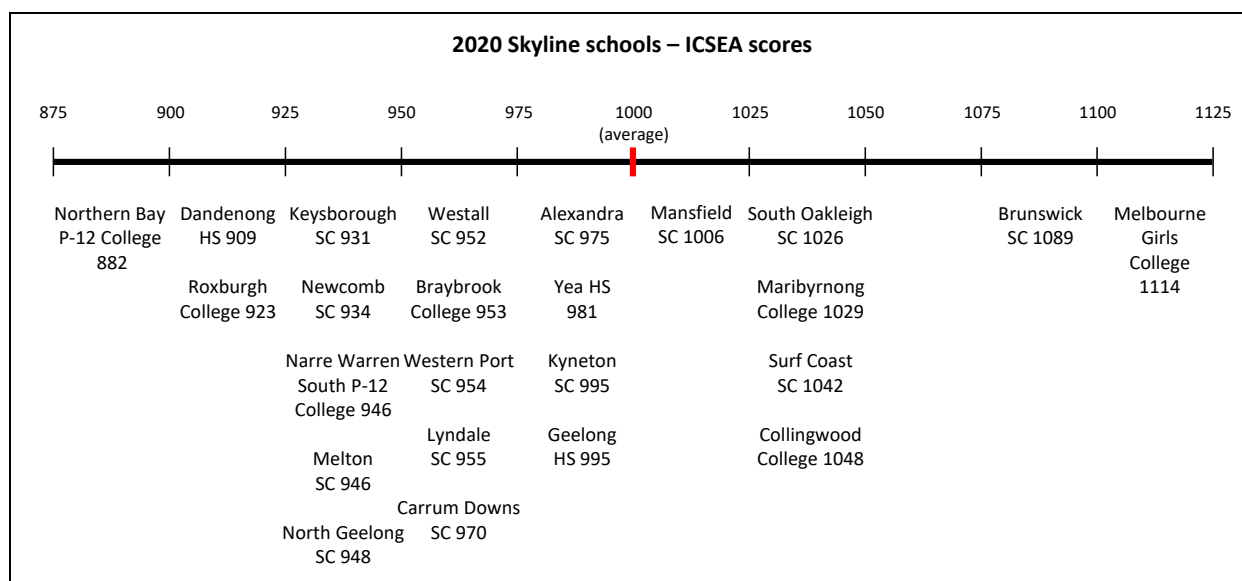
Notes: Two students from the 2009 intake were removed from the program due to a lack of commitment. Another student from the 2009 intake moved to Mt Clear SC in 2010, and the school joined the program just for her Year 12. One student from the 2011 intake moved to England before completing school. One student from the 2017 intake moved to another school with her family and did not continue in 2018. A 2018 student was hospitalised for an extended time and did not complete VCE. A 2019 student is doing VCE over three years and will complete in 2021. Several students withdrew from school and did not complete VCE (2011, 2018 x 2, 2019).

Addressing educational disadvantage

The index of community socio-educational advantage (ICSEA) was created by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) specifically to enable meaningful comparison of achievement data for students in schools across Australia. Key factors in students' family backgrounds (e.g. parents' occupation, school education and non-school education) are known to have an influence on students' educational outcomes at school. ICSEA is constructed taking into account both student- and school-level factors. While a school's ICSEA score is not a reflection of the circumstances for any individual student, schools above the ICSEA average of 1000 have student enrolments from families that are, on average, relatively advantaged, while those below 1000 are relatively disadvantaged.

Skyline schools are typically chosen from areas of relatively high socio-economic and educational disadvantage. That is, schools with low ICSEA values (as reported on the MySchool website, www.myschool.edu.au) Northern Bay P-12 College in Geelong, for example, has an ICSEA value of 882 (among the lowest 6% in the state). Seven other Skyline schools with participating students in 2020 had ICSEA values between 909 and 948. Schools with ICSEA scores below 950 typically have at least half of their students coming from families among the bottom quartile nationally for socio-educational advantage, with on average 3% of students at these schools from families in the top quartile for socio-educational advantage. A further nine Skyline schools in 2020 had ICSEA values between 952 and 995 – below the 1000 point benchmark and indicating a student cohort with net disadvantage.

Seven of the 24 current Skyline schools have ICSEA values in excess of the 1000 point benchmark (i.e. on average students at the school are relatively advantaged), with two of these (Melbourne Girls College and Brunswick SC) having scores close to 1100.[1]

2020 Skyline schools – ICSEA scores

875	900	925	950	975	1000 (average)	1025	1050	1075	1100	1125

Northern Bay P-12 College 882	Dandenong HS 909	Keysborough SC 931	Westall SC 952	Alexandra SC 975	Mansfield SC 1006	South Oakleigh SC 1026		Brunswick SC 1089	Melbourne Girls College 1114
	Roxburgh College 923	Newcomb SC 934	Braybrook College 953	Yea HS 981		Maribyrnong College 1029			
		Narre Warren South P-12 College 946	Western Port SC 954	Kyneton SC 995		Surf Coast SC 1042			
			Lyndale SC 955	Geelong HS 995		Collingwood College 1048			
		Melton SC 946	Carrum Downs SC 970						
		North Geelong SC 948							

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[1] Again, it should be noted that ICSEA is not a reflection of an individual student's circumstance, and that individual disadvantage can become more conspicuous when it exists in a relatively advantaged cohort of students.

4.   COVID-19

Description of adjustments to the Skyline Program in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, drawn from Think Impact's 2020 SROI research report – Growing value in uncertain times: A Social Return on Investment Evaluation of Skyline Education Foundation activities.

In March 2020 the Victorian government announced a State of Emergency and introduced sweeping and rolling lockdowns of the economy and society in an endeavour to manage the spread of COVID-19 in the community. In addition to significant restrictions on movement of people and access to services, the lockdown required students in schools and universities to undertake remote and flexible learning for nearly two full terms.

Learning from home required students to have access to a suitable workspace, devices on which to download school tasks and communicate with teachers, and a reliable internet connection.

In response to this unprecedented challenge for students, teachers and families, Skyline pivoted their activities to an online and remote format to continue supporting students and alumni from across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria to remain engaged with their schooling and community.

In early 2020, Skyline recognised a need to respond to a number of challenges students and alumni were experiencing with their study, employment and mental health. Skyline made strategic changes to the Program, introducing new and enhancing existing activities including: a Pathways Program to assist students with navigating pathways into university; additional study assistance through a study club, tutorial program and exam revision sessions; facilitated weekly Zoom sessions for students and alumni to connect; and mental health support through a partnership with the Cairnmillar Institute.

With the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions in March 2020, Skyline decided to fully pivot the program to an online and remote format rather than cease or restrict activities. At the same time, learning from home required new resources and was putting additional stress on the Skyline student community, exacerbating existing hardships. In response to these growing needs, Skyline provided critical resources such as laptops, desks and access to reliable internet, and increased their direct engagement with students and alumni, checking in with them more often.

5.   Benefits for participating students

Updating analysis and commentary from previous evaluations

Finance, focus and friends

Previous evaluations have asked Skyline students what they thought were the main benefits from being selected to participate in the Skyline Program. Their responses reflected the value of the Program's different elements – which individually and collectively support high potential students in disadvantaged circumstances. These include:

- easing the financial burden for students and their families, allowing them to concentrate on their VCE without having to worry about financial disadvantage
- access to study materials, resources and academic support
- encouragement and personal support from: i) the Skyline Program Manager/Coordinators and Board members; ii) their Skyline peers; and iii) Companion Teachers and school leaders
- personal and skills development (especially through the residential program and face-to-face and online sessions), contributing to increased self-confidence, self-belief and motivation to succeed
- pathways guidance and advice
- being part of a network of like-minded students and formation of strong friendships

- awareness of university scholarships and awards
- networking and public speaking opportunities through Skyline events.

The Year 11 and Year 12 students who responded to the 2020 evaluation survey reinforced all of these points. Skyline's financial support was mentioned by many respondents, and is highly valued for its capacity to remove a major stressor for the student and their family. With financial pressures reduced, Skyline students report that they were able to realise more significant education and life benefits related to VCE and post-school study and employment pathways, skills development, resources (especially for navigating through COVID), confidence and self-awareness, mentoring and professional networks, and lifelong friendships.

The feedback from Year 11 and Year 12 students in 2020 illustrate the immediate value of the Skyline Program.

> *"Skyline enabled me to have an education. If it were not for Skyline, I would have had to work multiple jobs or perhaps even drop out of school to help support my family."*

> *"Developing a broader awareness of my situation and the fact that I am not the only one that may be in need, rather finding comfort in others like myself."*

> *"The benefits I found the most rewarding were discovering new people and finding out how diverse people my age really are, having only been stuck in a bubble for most of my life."*

> *"Being selected into the Skyline Program has introduced me to many amazing and inspiring peers. Meeting them during the residential camp and masterclasses was a great experience as I felt a sense of belonging. The staff and students were all so supportive and encouraging, reminding us that we were all gifted. This helped me gain confidence in myself and not doubt my abilities as often."*

> *"Friendships, that will last a lifetime, and incredible connections with established people that will help me transition into the workforce and further study."*

> *"Realising what the world has to offer me and what I have to offer it."*

> *"Skyline helped me gain a stronger sense of identity. Through masterclasses and guest presentations, I was able to learn more about myself and how I could be the best version of myself. I gained a broader idea of how to achieve success rather than one fixed pathway to achieve my dreams through an ATAR. Now I see a bigger and brighter picture of how I can fulfill my dreams. A strengthened identity has improved my sense of confidence and optimism. Skyline not only provided financial support to maximise my learning, they sparked a motivation within me to strive to do my best."*

> *"I know I can always rely on Skyline and don't feel as alone in my journey. My peers and the staff have ensured I know that there are people in my corner."*

> *"Skyline relieved my family of the burden of finances associated with schools. Apart from this, Skyline provided me with a support network and friendships that have been more than valuable over the periods of isolation this year."*

Value add

The 2011 evaluation noted that the Skyline Program develops and delivers three broad benefits for participating students. The ongoing feedback on the program shows that these benefits are still part of Skyline's DNA. That is, Skyline adds values to the lives of young people through:

Opportunity … for talented but disadvantaged young people to realise potential.

Optimism … for young people, their families and their schools

Outcomes … in education, training and employment.

The financial support is unquestionably of real benefit to participating students and their families, as it allows them to focus on academic endeavours rather than just getting by. However, it is the personal development, the pathways sessions and the wrap-around support provided through schools and the Skyline Program which makes Skyline so much more than just a 'scholarship'.

The results of the 2020 evaluation survey continue to demonstrate a very strong sense about the program's value to students. Firstly, it provides students with personal development opportunities – a chance to build confidence in themselves and skills that will benefit them in the future. More than 90% of survey respondents identified these factors as significant benefits from the Skyline Program. Secondly, Skyline gives students optimism for the future. Again, almost 90% of students agreed that as a result of participating in the program they were more aware of their personal and career potential, more confident that they could realise that potential, and as a result more optimistic about their future. Whatever difficulties these young people have experienced, and whatever personal and family challenges they may have faced, the Skyline Program has given them hope for a better future.
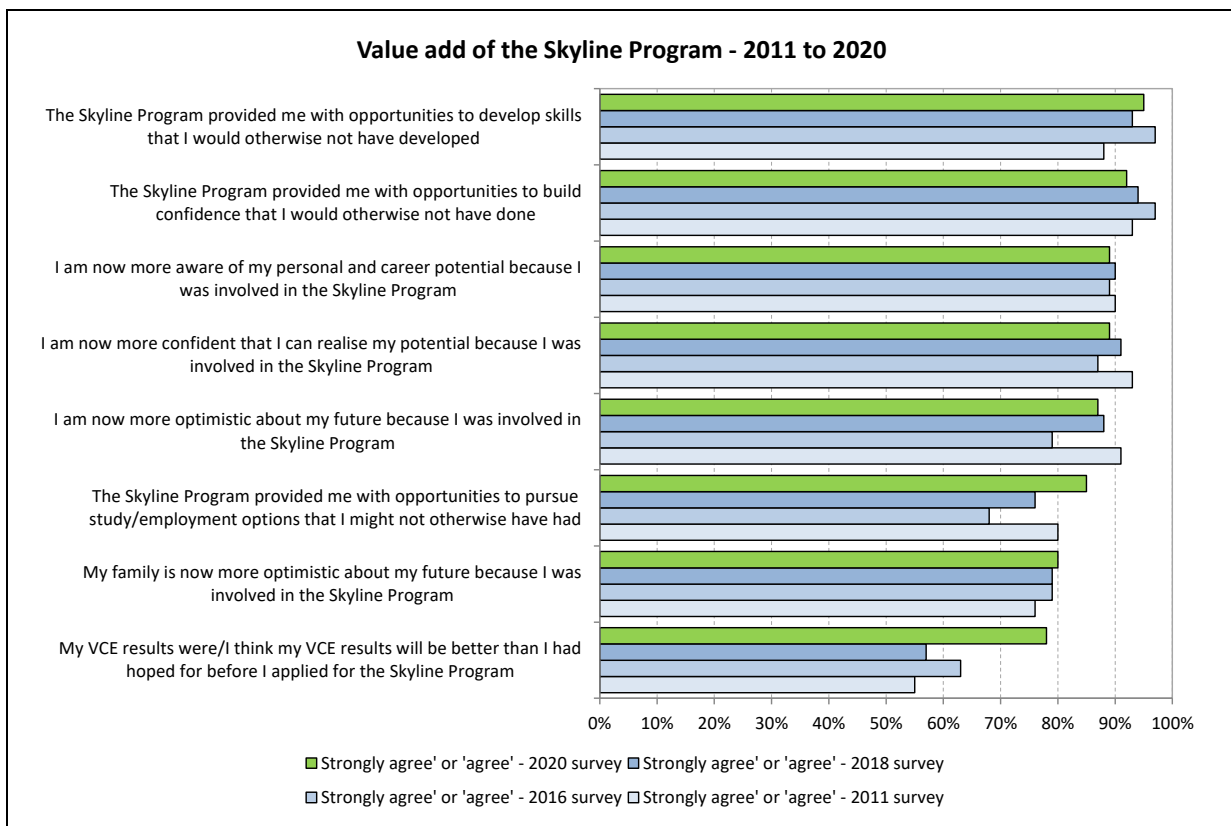

Value add of the Skyline Program
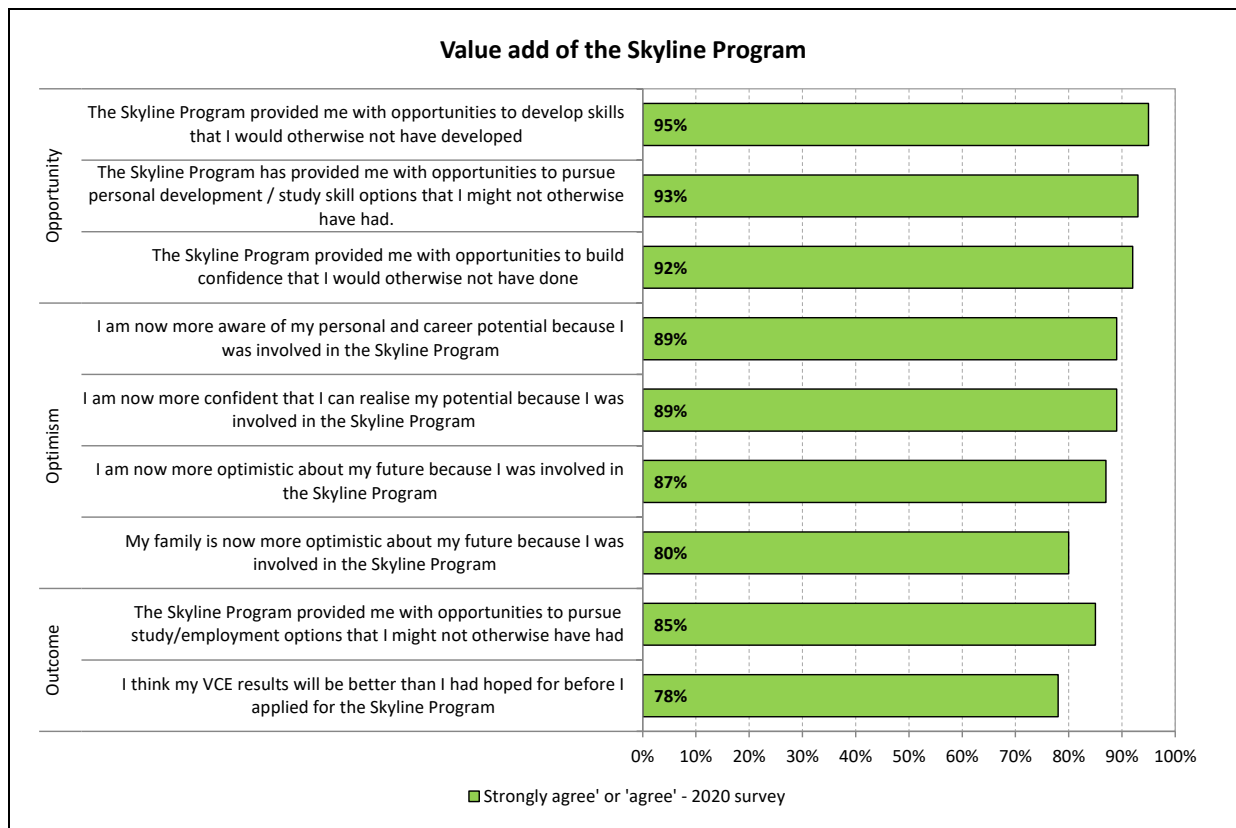
Finally, Skyline has contributed to these young people having better study and employment outcomes than they might have had without the program. In 2020, 78% of survey respondents agreed (50%

'strongly agree', 28% 'agree') that their VCE results are likely to be better than they had hoped for prior to applying for the Skyline Program. 85% agreed that the Skyline Program provided them with opportunities to pursue study/employment options that they might not otherwise have had.

It is also worth noting the consistency in responses from Skyline students over time to these questions about the value of the Skyline Program. For while the program has grown and evolved over the past 15 years, the appreciation of its core value has changed very little. The results from evaluations in 2011, 2016, 2018 and 2020 continue to show: i) very high rates of agreement among different groups of students about the benefits they gain from participation in the Skyline Program; and ii) similar rankings of the most significant benefits of the program. That is:

- around 85% to 90% of Skyline students 'strongly agree' (approx. 50%-55%) or 'agree' (approx. 30%-40%) that:
  - Skyline provides them with opportunities to develop skills and build confidence that they would otherwise not have had
  - they are now more aware of, confident in and optimistic about their future because of being part of the Skyline program
- around 70% of Skyline students 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that Skyline has opened up study and employment opportunities that they might not otherwise have had
- around 55% agree that their VCE results were better (or in 2020 are expected to be better) than they had hoped for before they applied for the Skyline Program.

In fact, the question about students' awareness of their personal and career potential has now elicited almost identical results in four consecutive surveys. The only real variation in the 2020 survey from past surveys was in relation to expectations about VCE results – 78% in agreement vs 58% in the three previous surveys. As also noted in Section 8, this may be due to the opportunities afforded Skyline students in a COVID-affected 2020 when compared with other VCE students.

Value add of the Skyline Program - 2011 to 2020

Changing lives

Students were asked in the evaluation survey how their life might have been different (if at all) if they had not participated in the Skyline Program. Their anecdotal feedback is summarised in the following table.

Skyline means more/better …		And less/fewer …
▪ Financial security	▪ Mental health	▪ Financial stress … emotional stress … academic stress
▪ Learning resources	▪ Confidence	
▪ VCE results	▪ Motivation	▪ Part-time jobs and working hours
▪ Direction	▪ Hopeful	
▪ Career ideas	▪ Personal growth	▪ Ignorant about the world
▪ University opportunities	▪ Growth mindset	▪ Mediocrity
▪ Friends	▪ Support	▪ Lost

The net effect is a greater level of confidence among these students about their own capabilities and their potential – as individuals, for their families and for their communities.

"I would have followed a path I wouldn't have wanted to go down."

"I would continue to work a few different jobs where my family's situation was my priority and school was my last."

"I wouldn't have had a device for school and I would not be as motivated. I wouldn't be anywhere as optimistic or excited about my future and probably wouldn't have the guaranteed university place as I wouldn't have believed in my abilities and probably wouldn't have applied."

"Given this tumultuous year, if it weren't for Skyline I would most likely have faced a severe decrease in motivation and potentially a less optimistic view of my future."

"My mental health state would have been absolutely demolished."

"My family/relatives may not have had many expectations regarding my abilities and potential career, but this program has really given them more hope."

Aspirations for the future

The Skyline Program has the capacity to change the lives of young people, and their education and employment aspirations. In feedback to the 2020 survey a small number of students said that to date participation in Skyline had not significantly influenced their education and employment goals. However, most students into one of the three following categories, where Skyline had:

i)   provided students with greater clarity and focus to a general idea about education and career opportunities within a particular field

ii)   increased students' confidence that they can aim high and will achieve their long-held education and employment goal

iii)   highlighted the importance of following a passion, even if this meant changing one's goals for the future.

The first group reported no major change in their study and career goals, but through Skyline supported advice and reflection they had narrowed down their intentions in their chosen field. For example:

- "becoming more specific in the type of doctor I would like to be – a dermatologist"
- "narrowed down the field of engineering to civil or environmental engineering"
- "shown me the numerous pathways that medicine can lead into and the way to access them"
- "my goals have expanded into entering law and global studies and moving into a field of politics rather than a branch of law".

"Skyline, specifically through the Motiva reports and Rachel's career counselling, really helped me narrow done what exact university course and career I am interested in and showed me the multiple pathways and opportunities that I could take. Now I have a lot more clarity and I aim to get into a Criminology Course at Monash University or Deakin University."

The second group also retained their basic study and career goals, but now feel more motivated, better supported and more able to achieve them. For example:

- "my goals still remain the same, but I am far more hopeful and confident about it with Skyline support"
- "Skyline has helped me to better understand the options and pathways, as well as helping me develop and better understand my own capabilities"
- "I have been able to meet people that have inspired me to think bigger and develop my confidence"
- "Skyline gave me the confidence to aim very high"

"My dreams have changed from merely dreams to goals that I can now better make steps towards achieving."

"I am striving for a career that I always dreamt of, but didn't believe it was a career I could

The final group are those who have been struck by the importance of following their passion – which in some cases reinforced their pre-existing goals and in others completely transformed them. For example:

- from a pilot to engineering
- from psychology to acting
- from medicine to software engineering
- from dentistry to teaching.

"Skyline's Masterclasses helped me realise the importance of working towards something I'm interested in and passionate about as it will be what I will be spending most of my time doing."

"I would like to become a teacher. Skyline helped support me throughout one of the toughest years I have ever had to face. I felt alone, isolated and lost. Occupied with personal dilemmas, school was not my priority as much as I would have liked it to be. However, Skyline made me realise just how life changing education can be. I hope this is something I can do as a teacher and inspire students to not give up."

6.   Student ATARS

*Updating analysis and commentary from previous evaluations*

ATAR scores

In 2020, 49 students who commenced with Skyline in 2019 completed Year 12. Of these 49, 48 (98%) received a scored ATAR and one student completed Year 12 with an unscored VCE due to mental health related anxieties.[2]

Of the 98% who received a scored ATAR, all received ATARs of 50 and above. Nine students (19%) had an ATAR of 90 or above, with an additional 13 (27%) having ATARs of 80 or above. In total, 71% of 2020 Skyline VCE completers had ATARs of 70 or more.

Since 2006 the students accepted into the Skyline Program have had a very high rate of successfully completing VCE and gaining entry into university and vocational courses of their choice. From the 2006 intake to the 2016 intake (who completed Year 12 in 2017), 129 Skyline students completed their VCE and provided their ATAR scores to Skyline.[3] Overall, these Skyline students achieved outstanding VCE results, with 62% having ATARs of 80 or above and only 2% having ATARs below 50.

From 2017, the Skyline Program began its expansion phase (see Section 3), with the addition in 2017 and 2018 of students from secondary schools in the Geelong region (whose selection into the program was based on some slightly different criteria). Further expansion occurred in 2019, with the first intake of students from Victoria's regional north-east and extra schools in Geelong and Melbourne's south-east. More than past cohorts, the 2019 results show a fairly even spread across the range of ATAR scores from 60 to 100.

Year 12	% of students by ATAR group						Number of student results
	90+	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	< 50	
2007 to 2017	36%	26%	13%	13%	10%	2%	129
2018	30%	22%	19%	4%	7%	18%	29
2019	24%	24%	11%	18%	5%	18%	38
2020	19%	27%	25%	21%	8%	-	48

2020 ATAR scores (48 students)

ATAR scores - 2006 to 2019 intakes

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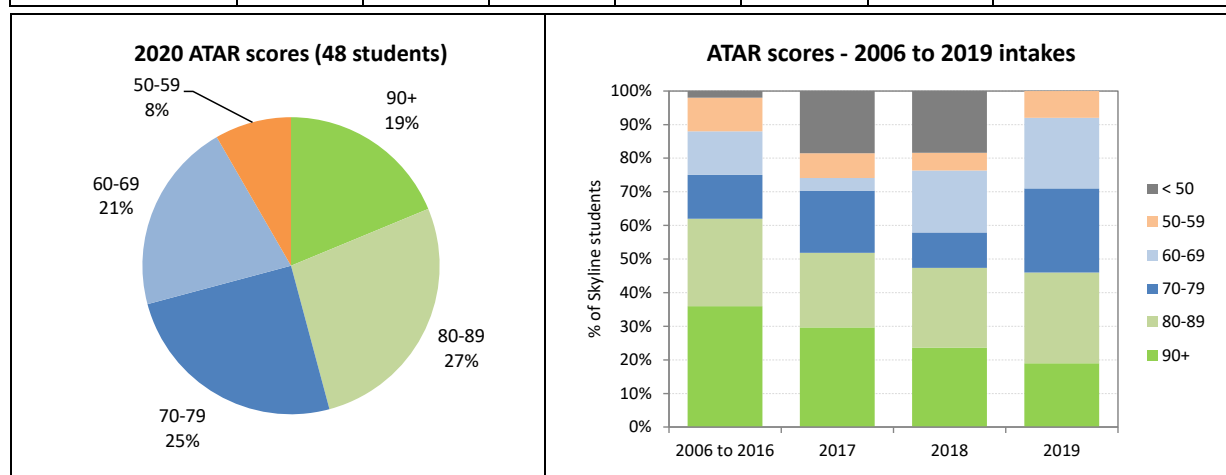
[2] VCAA is expected to report a significant increase in unscored VCE results in 2020 due to the high number of students whose capacity to successfully complete Year 12 was compromised by COVID conditions.

[3] Prior to 2009 the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) was known as Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER).

School awards and recognition

More than half of the 2020 Skyline cohort (Years 11 and 12) have been recognised for their achievements by their schools – elected into positions of leadership and responsibility and/or awarded citizenship prizes. Among the 61 students who completed the 2020 evaluation survey, the following list of achievements was reported. It almost certainly understates the actual scope of recognition of the Skyline cohort.[4]

- 8 students were School/College Captains
- 1 was a school prefect, 8 were House Captains, 1 was an Environmental Captain, 1 a Diversity Captain, 1 a Student Voice Captain and 1 a Digital Technologies Captain
- 4 were student representatives on the School Council
- 4 were elected to the SRC (Student Representative Council), including roles as President
- 5 received community leadership awards from service clubs
  - Plain English Speaking Award – State Champion
  - Regional Youth of the Year
  - Public Speaking Award
  - ADF Long Tan Award
  - ADF Innovators Award
- 2 received Kwong Lee Dow scholarships, 1 received a Principal's Scholarship to Melbourne University.

  "I was a Literacy Leader. I hosted the Write a Book in a Day event at my school which supports the Kids Cancer Foundation."

This recognition of academic and leadership excellence does not include the contribution that Skyline students make to their schools and communities through sporting, musical, service and citizenship activities. Nor does it recognise the essential roles some play as primary caregiver in their families.

7.   Post-school education and employment pathways

Updating analysis and commentary from previous evaluations

When asked what the planned to do in 2021, the 41 Year 12 respondents to the evaluation survey identified a mix of different university, vocational, employment and life options.

Education Institution	Proposed Course		Other
▪ Monash x 12 ▪ Deakin x 9 ▪ Melbourne x 7 ▪ VU x 2 ▪ RMIT ▪ ACU ▪ TAFE	▪ Arts x 7 ▪ Science x 6 ▪ Biomedicine x 2 ▪ Engineering x 2 ▪ Law x 2 ▪ Medical Imaging x 2 ▪ Applied Science ▪ Apprentice Electrician ▪ Business / Food Technology ▪ Computer Science	▪ Criminology ▪ Education ▪ Forensics ▪ Health / Physical Education ▪ Medicine ▪ Music ▪ Nursing ▪ Outdoor Leadership ▪ Visual Arts ▪ Wildlife Conservation	▪ Chill ▪ Try everything available first ▪ Maybe uni, maybe acting

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[4] Note: The 2020 evaluation survey was conducted at the end of the school year, which in 2020 was before students received their VCE results and before schools announced Year 12 academic awards.

Note: Due to the altered timeframes for release and acceptance of offers for university and vocational courses, information is not yet available on the anticipated education and employment pathways for students who completed their VCE in 2020. Information will be analysed as this becomes available.

8. Factors influencing program success

Updating analysis and commentary from previous evaluations

Factors influencing VCE success

When asked about the extent to which a number of factors influenced their VCE success, students rated the Skyline Program rated very highly.

Three factors were considered by at least 85% of students as having had a 'great' or 'large' impact on their VCE success, with the Skyline Program the most prominent factor. Overall, 90% of students said that the Skyline program was to a 'great' or 'large' extent' an influential factor. The other two major VCE success factors were what the individual student brought to the challenge – their desire to succeed – and the support of Skyline staff. A student's academic abilities, the support of friends and the support of teachers and school leaders were all seen as having a 'great' or 'large' influence by 75% to 80% of survey respondents.
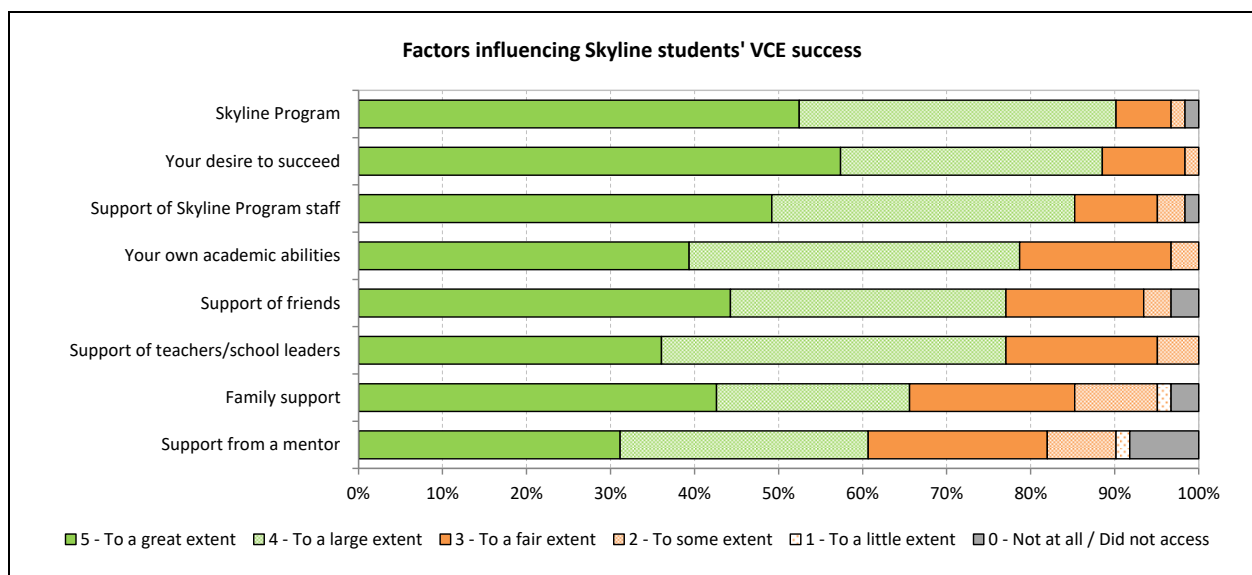
The 2020 results were consistent with those from previous Skyline cohorts with two exceptions. In 2020 the support of friends in VCE success was seen as more important than it had been in the past (77% 2020 survey vs 67% 2018 survey). And interestingly, a student's own academic abilities were seen as less important to success in 2020 than previously (79% in 2020 vs 87% in 2018). It is likely that the significant interruptions to the 2020 academic year, especially for Year 12 students, shifted the emphasis for some from an intense focus on academic success to simply getting through the year intact.

The impact of program-related factors

So what is it that makes the Skyline Program so important in contributing to students' VCE success? According to the students the answer combines the three key components of the Skyline Program – financial support, transformative learning experiences and an educational and personal support framework.
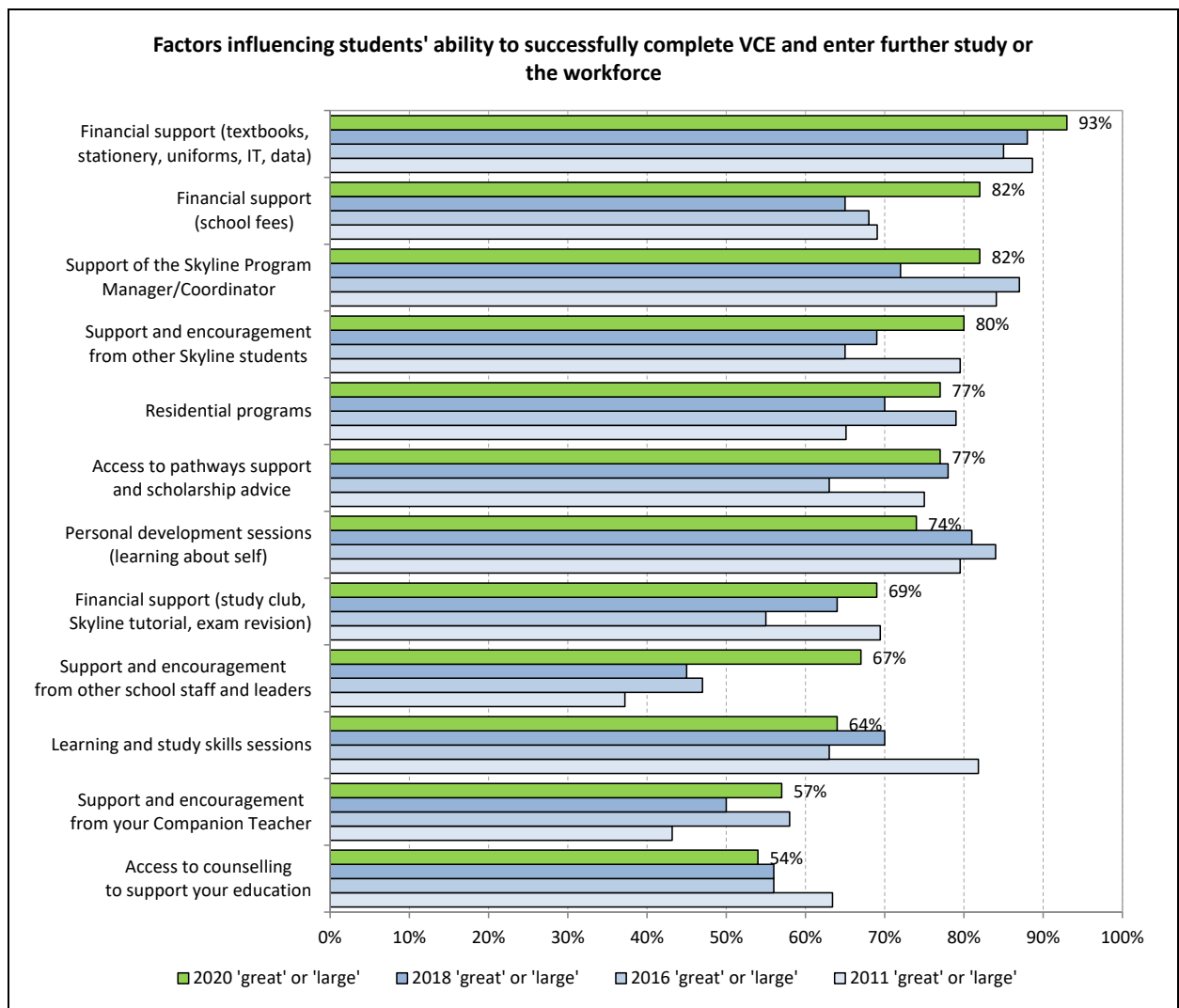
When asked in 2020 to what extent a range of program-related factors positively influenced their ability to successfully complete school and enter further study or the workforce, Year 11 and 12 students identified the four most influential factors as:

- financial support for textbooks, stationery, uniforms, IT and data (93%)
- financial support for school fees (82%)
- support and encouragement from the Skyline Program Manager/Coordinator (82%)
- support and encouragement from other Skyline students (80%)

At least 80% of survey respondents indicated that these factors had influenced their educational capacity and outcomes to a 'great' or 'large' extent.

Three other factors had between 70% and 80% of respondents rating the impact on students' success at school as being 'great' or 'large'. These included residential programs (77%), access to pathways support and scholarship advice (77%) and personal development sessions (74%).

The following chart presents the 2020 student responses alongside those from previous Skyline cohorts (i.e. evaluation surveys conducted at the end of 2011, 2016 and 2018). Three key features stand out.

Factors influencing students' ability to successfully complete VCE and enter further study or the workforce

Factor	2020
Financial support (textbooks, stationery, uniforms, IT, data)	93%
Financial support (school fees)	82%
Support of the Skyline Program Manager/Coordinator	82%
Support and encouragement from other Skyline students	80%
Residential programs	77%
Access to pathways support and scholarship advice	77%
Personal development sessions (learning about self)	74%
Financial support (study club, Skyline tutorial, exam revision)	69%
Support and encouragement from other school staff and leaders	67%
Learning and study skills sessions	64%
Support and encouragement from your Companion Teacher	57%
Access to counselling to support your education	54%

Legend: ■ 2020 'great' or 'large' ■ 2018 'great' or 'large' ■ 2016 'great' or 'large' □ 2011 'great' or 'large'

1. The relative ranking of factors influencing Skyline outcomes for students are fairly **consistent over time**. That is, financial support is typically seen as the most important factor for students during their school years. The support and encouragement of Skyline staff and fellow Skyline students is also seen as important in helping students to get through VCE.
2. On average, the **2020 responses were higher** than from previous cohorts. That is, the proportion of students who rated Skyline Program components as having a 'great' or 'large' influence on the VCE experience was higher than in any of the past surveys. Anecdotal survey feedback suggests that this is probably due to Skyline providing a point of stability and targeted support in what was otherwise a very challenging year. It is likely that the value of Skyline was more evident to students in 2020 when, having spent much of their school life coming from a point of relative disadvantage, they actually had the benefit of a supportive network around them as other students in their school had some of their usual supports stripped away due to COVID.
3. **Two factors took a 'hit' in 2020**, in terms of falling down the rankings – the personal development sessions and the learning and study skills sessions. This is not surprising as the shift from a face-to-face to an online model removed many of the incidental social benefits and connections that were realised by previous Skyline cohorts. This outcome is consistent with other research on the impact of a shift to online communication and engagement during COVID shutdowns.

9. Alumni

Feedback on the transition from school to further education and employment

A short survey for Skyline alumni was released in December 2020. 12 alumni responded. Seven completed VCE between 2017 and 2019 and are still engaged in or have just completed university or further education. Another five completed VCE between 2009 and 2016, with four now having employment in a field of their choice.

When asked about the transition from school to further education this small sample reported a range of experiences which reflect the challenges during this period:

- the initial excitement and challenge of dealing with newfound independence (which can be both liberating and daunting)
- having to balance life, study and work and find the motivation and discipline to keep oneself on track
- the 'shock' of being exposed to students from high SES backgrounds
- the transition being made easier with help from school friends, old teachers, Skyliners and new university friends (i.e. being able to reach out to an effective support network)
- the relief of pressure and uncertainty when they were able to gain some part-time or casual employment during their university years (e.g. at their school, through friends, through Skyline)
- the benefit of having been equipped with networking and career development skills as part of the Skyline Program
- COVID restrictions meaning that 2019 VCE completers have not yet had the 'real university experience'.

All respondents have kept in contact with people who supported them during their VCE Skyline experience. For most this included both the Skyline Program Manager during their time in the Program as well as fellow Skyline students. One third had also kept in touch with their Companion Teacher.

10. Net Promoter Score

Updating NPS results from previous evaluations

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a metric to measure customer loyalty. The NPS is based on a single question – "On a scale of 0-10, how likely is it that you would recommend [name] to your friends, family or business associates?" Respondents that give a 6 or below are called Detractors, those with a score of 7 or 8 are Passives, and respondents with a score of 9 or 10 are Promoters." To calculate the NPS, subtract the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters. An NPS that is positive (i.e. higher than zero) is felt to be good, and an NPS of +50 is excellent.

The NPS was first calculated for Skyline in 2018, with a second survey in 2019. Skyline has now set targets for the program including an NPS for different stakeholder groups.

A survey of current Skyline students and alumni in December 2020 asked respondents if they would recommend Skyline to a student who was eligible to apply. Surveys of Skyline schools (companion teachers and principals) and Skyline supporters will be conducted in early 2021.

The results from the 2020 student and alumni surveys are shown below. The results exceed the Board targets and continue to show the high regard in which students and alumni hold the Skyline Program.

2020 stakeholder group	Responses	Promoter 9-10	Passive 7-8	Detractor 0-6	NPS
Current students	61	83%	14%	3%	+ 80
Year 11 students	20	80%	15%	5%	+ 75
Year 12 students	41	85%	12%	2%	+ 83
Former students (Alumni)	10	90%	10%	0%	+ 90

Stakeholder group	Responses			NPS			Skyline Target
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	
Current students	43	45	61	+ 69	+ 87	+ 83	≥ 60
Former students (Alumni)	20	10	10	+ 90	+ 100	+ 90	≥ 75
Schools (Companion Teachers, Principals)	11	24	*	+ 82	+83	*	≥ 75
Skyline Sponsors/Supporters	7	21	*	+72	+90	*	≥ 65

Skyline Program - Net Promoter Score, 2018 to 2020
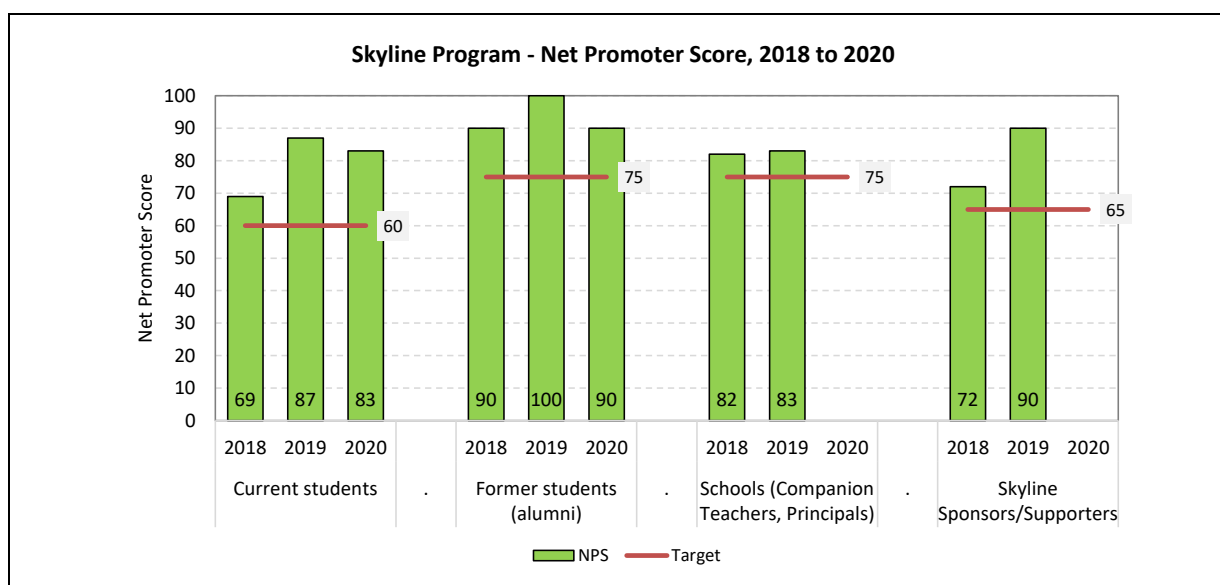
11. Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Brief summary of research findings

Skyline's 2019 Social Return on Investment (SROI) research conducted by Think Impact examined the value created in a typical two-year program. The research found that for every dollar invested in the Skyline Program approximately $12.19 of social and economic value was created.

Additional research in 2020 – *Growing value in uncertain times: A Social Return on Investment Evaluation of Skyline Education Foundation activities*, Think Impact, 2020 – found that in the context of COVID-19 the value of Skyline's impact increased to $13.20. The key findings from the 2020 SROI analysis were that:

- Skyline helped to maintain student outcomes and grew value in 2020, despite the negative influences of the COVID-19 lockdown and remote learning
- students experienced the most value (83%), with 'stronger self-identity' being the most highly valued outcome
- alumni experienced 7%, with 'sense of self and purpose' the most highly valued outcome
- parents and siblings of students each experienced 4% of the total value
- the federal government experienced 2% of the value.

Notably, the research found that if Skyline had chosen to cease all face-to-face program and support activities and not pivot to online and remote delivery, the value created through the program would have reduced to $1.70 per dollar invested. The modelling assumed that the only value associated with this stripped down model would have been created through financial assistance in the form of external scholarships and reduced household stress. While Skyline would still have created positive value, by pivoting to an online and remote model Skyline was able to retain and grow value through resources and educational and personal support at a time when negative external influences may have prevented this value creation.